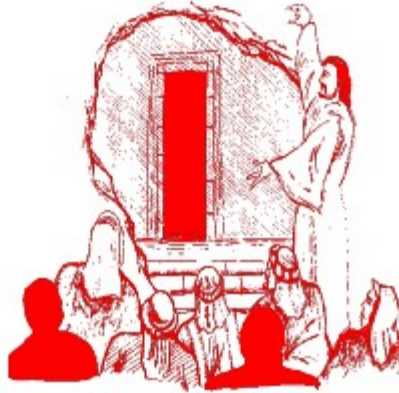


Tribute to The Life and Memory of Marvin Wilson



JOHN 11:21-26

²¹ “Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.” ²³ Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” ²⁴ Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” ²⁵ Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; ²⁶ and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” [\[1\]](#)

PRAYER

O Lord our God and Father, enable us to claim the ministry left behind by Marvin Wilson, your son and our friend and brother in Christ. Help each of us to envision our own lives as lives of dedication to your service, just as Marvin consecrated his life to your service. Give us grace to live our days in such a way that our lives and our deaths may be precious in your sight. You have given and now You have taken from us. But even in our grief and pain, we continue to call You “Blessed.” We offer our thanks for giving us the life of this dear soul and for the gift of many memories. Most of all, we thank You for the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. We offer our thanks in Christ’s name, Amen.

TRIBUTE TO THE LIFE AND MEMORY OF MARVIN WILSON

First Phase of His Life in Christ

It is appropriate that we reflect—Sunday, April 13, 2003—upon the loss of one of God’s ministers. Family and friends met on April 11, 2003 to honor the life and memory of Marvin Wilson (December 19, 1926—April 09, 2003). I first met Marvin about forty-seven years ago through Katrina Burdette, who later became my wife. Marvin, so to

speaking, was a latecomer to the assembly. I still remember, though vaguely, his first Sunday morning visit to the Vonora Avenue Church of Christ. His coming was the beginning of a long and lasting relationship between Marvin and God. Prior to Marvin's visit, Katrina, his daughter, started attending first and later his other daughters (Frieda and Darlene), his son (Marvin), and his first wife (Hazel), who later died of cancer (January 9, 1975). After Marvin's visit, I baptized his daughters, his son, his former wife, and finally Marvin himself. After Marvin's acceptance of Christ, I also baptized his mother (Julia Zelma Seamon)

Prior to his conversion to Christ, he was adamantly opposed to his family meeting with the church. But, as a result of an automobile accident—an accident that left him unable to work for about six months—he had a change of heart about Christianity. During his confinement, even though Marvin was not a believer, the Vonora Avenue Church of Christ paid his utilities and part of his house payments. Also, my first wife and I carried to the family a part of our groceries each week. This made an impression upon Marvin. As a result of this kindness, he told his family that they needed to check out this congregation. Marvin started studying to prove to me that Jesus was not the Messiah. After careful deliberation he came to the conclusion that Jesus was the Son of God and the long-promised Messiah. After his acceptance of Jesus as Lord in his life, he always remained faithful to God. He never forgot the deed from that day onward. I found a note in his Bible that reads: "The way we hear is the way we live; an argument is the weakest way to get anything over to another."

Second Phase of His Life in Christ

Several years later, he and Evelyn (his second wife—married on February 14, 1976) started a congregation in their home. To begin with, I was pastor, but later he became pastor of this church known as the Lakewood Drive Chapel. As a result of Marvin's activities in this congregation, today, there are still several faithful people who continue to serve the Lord, either directly or indirectly as a result of his labor. After his first wife's death (1975), he met Evelyn through his daughter Darlene Violette. Evelyn later became his wife; they lived together for twenty-seven years. Until his death, both shared in this ministry. He and his wife Evelyn conducted their Christian ministry out of their home for about twenty-five years. After an extended illness, Marvin and Evelyn had to dissolve the local congregation meeting in their home. But all of these believers now belong to other local congregations. Both Marvin and Evelyn taught Jesus as God's Way of salvation. This congregation was actively involved in saving unborn children from extermination through abortion. Marvin also began a group known as Pastors for Life. Only God knows the total good that came out of the congregation known as the Lakewood Drive Chapel.

Prior to his death, Marvin became a part of the New Covenant Fellowship (June 2002), along with his wife and all of his children. In addition to these loved ones becoming a part of this fellowship, there are several of his grandchildren and great grandchildren who are members of the New Covenant Fellowship—a testimony to Marvin and Evelyn. Both of these individuals touched the lives of many people. Marvin fought the good fight of faith. One of his greatest desires was to see all of his children in a relationship with God. A few months before his death, he witnessed all of his children attending the New Covenant Fellowship.

A DEATH FELT BY ALL

What has happened is indeed sad, but, at the same time, there is rejoicing that Marvin is no longer suffering from the excruciating pain that he endured for several years. Fortunately, God in His wisdom designed death as a means of escape. Death was his getaway from pain and his entrance into the very presence of God. We may never really understand the agony that he endured for so long. Yet, the important thing is that we can learn from his affliction of how to continue to look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, without wavering in our faith in the sovereignty of God. His death can also reveal to each of us what we need to know about ourselves, about God, and about life. Marvin, like the rest of us, had a body of flesh and bone. Being flesh, he was not perfect in the flesh, which is true of us all. We have all sinned and fallen short of God's glory. Even though the flesh is often times extremely weak, nevertheless, God is still cognizant of our make-up. The Psalmist expresses it this way:

³⁸ Yet he was merciful; he forgave their iniquities and did not destroy them. Time after time he restrained his anger and did not stir up his full wrath. ³⁹ He remembered that they were but flesh, a passing breeze that does not return ([Psalm 78:38-39](#)).

“He remembered that they were but flesh,” reflects the tender mercies that God exhibits in spite of our frailties. One can hardly reflect upon [Psalm 78](#) without recalling the words of Jesus to Nicodemus:

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, [f](#) that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son ([John 3:16-18](#)).

Marvin's Notes in His Bible

Marvin, in the margin of his Bible—above John 17:20—wrote: “Lord, I believe—Thank you for salvation through Jesus Christ—Help me Lord in my weakness—Praise your holy name.” Marvin frequently focused his attention on the words of Paul to the Romans about God's grace. Marvin knew that if he based his salvation upon perfect law keeping that he would be condemned. So he turned to the grace of God made available to everyone who believes in His Son Jesus Christ. Marvin found comfort in the words of Paul to the Romans. Marvin reflected often upon the finished work of Christ. He read the words of Paul as Paul described with clarity and precision the righteousness of the believer:

But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. ²² This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified freely by

his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.²⁵ God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—²⁶ he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus (**Romans 3:21-26**).

In addition to this section of Scripture, Marvin was also excited about Paul's words in the very beginning of this epistle. Marvin cited these verses from Romans with joy about God's wisdom in accomplishing redemption for humanity. What were these other Scriptures? These Scriptures were **Romans 1:16-17**. Listen to Paul as he soars, as it were, into the heights of heaven with excitement as he describes how the righteous live:

I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.¹⁷ For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith (**1:16-17**).

In Marvin's study Bible, he wrote about The Roman Road to Salvation. In writing about this, he cited **Romans 3:10; 3:23; 6:23, 10:13; 5:1**. The following chart is a copy of the chart as listed in his Bible:

3:10	There is none righteous, no, not one.
3:23	For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.
6:23	For the wages of sin is death: but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.
10:13	For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.
5:1	Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection Upon the Life of Marvin

As everyone reflects upon the life of Marvin and his death, I wish to call attention to King David as an example of how people should react to the good and the bad in their lives. In David's "Song of the Bow" (**2 Samuel 1:17-27**), he had only good things to say about Saul, a man who was guilty of many crimes, including suicide. As we reflect upon Marvin's life, we should reflect upon the good works in Marvin's life that brought glory to God. Marvin accomplished a lot of good for the cause of Christ during his earthly sojourn of seventy-six years. As one reflects upon his life, one can hardly fail to recall the words of Jesus in His Sermon on the Mount:

¹⁴ "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven (Matthew 5:14-16).

MARVIN'S HOPE: NO CONDEMNATION IN CHRIST

As I think about the life of Marvin and his faith in Jesus, I cannot help but recall the words of Paul in the Roman letter: "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (**Romans 8:1**). Marvin was washed in the blood of the Lamb. Just as God said to the Israelites in Egypt, "when I see the blood, I will pass over you" (**Exodus 12:13**), so it will be for those who have put their faith in Christ. God, too, says to every individual that has been washed in the blood of the Lamb, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." Yes, Marvin was washed in the blood of the Lamb of God. It is my belief that when a person dies in Jesus Christ that death cannot rob him/her of eternal life. What kind of love is the love of God in Jesus Christ? For Paul, an ambassador of Christ, God's love is full of assurance. Paul expresses God's love this way:

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (**Romans 8:38-39**).

This is an exciting truth. Marvin rejoiced in this truth. Nothing can separate us from God's love. No matter how difficult the circumstances may be, God's love is still there. This message is written for those who wish to hear a message from God's Word that our hearts need, especially in the death of a loved one. God never turns His back upon His children. His love is an everlasting love. I do not believe that God will let Marvin down—or let him go. One day Christ will reunite His people and there will be a great reunion. Evelyn (his wife and co-laborer in the proclamation of God's Good News of salvation through Christ), Bubba (also called Marvin), Frieda, Darlene, and Katrina will one day be reunited with him in the ceaseless ages of eternity. Paul, too, speaks of the great reunion to the Christians at Thessalonica:

Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. ¹⁴ We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. ¹⁵ According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. ¹⁸ Therefore encourage each other with these words (**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**).

MARVIN'S LIFE IN CHRIST NOT IN VAIN

Marvin Wilson cannot return to us now, but one day we shall go to him. For the present, he is enjoying God's love and grace, just as we are experiencing God's love. It is this love that links our hearts together until we meet again. In our hearts, we still hurt. We

still feel the loss, even though we know that Marvin is better off in heaven. Heaven should not be just a destination that we aspire to go to someday, but rather heaven should be a motivation. In other words, God's people should build their whole lives on the vision of greater glory. Marvin did this! Marvin's life in Christ was not in vain, even though his life was very brief on earth—seventy-six years. Marvin relied upon the words of Paul to the Corinthians: “Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain” (**1 Corinthians 15:58**).

MARVIN'S PRAYER ANSWERED

As stated above, on April 11, 2003, Marvin's family and friends met to declare the value of his life and ministry upon earth. If life is not precious, then why should one weep over the one who has died? Life is precious, death is painful, but in Christ Jesus one can have true comfort. The words of Paul to the Philippians ring loud and clear to every believer: “I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far” (**Philippians 1:23**). On more than one occasion, Marvin prayed that God would take him home to spare him all the suffering that had fallen upon his frail body. Paul's statement is in harmony with the words of Paul in **Philippians 1:23**. This statement by Paul is for the living, not for the deceased. In fact, Paul further states: “It is more necessary for you that I remain in the body” (**1:24**). Even though Marvin is better off does not mean that the survivors feel better now that Marvin is dead, unless it is the comfort of knowing that Marvin is no longer suffering excruciating pain.

Yes, Marvin prayed that God would take him to heaven. Just as Marvin prayed, I, too, prayed that God would spare him pain through death. When Katrina and I received notice of her father's death, she prayed, “Thank you Jesus.” His other children—all Christians—thanked God that their father was no longer suffering. Yes, we, in our minds, affirm the truth of God's Word, but, nevertheless, in our hearts, we still hurt very deeply. Death leaves an empty place in the home and in the heart. Death is like an amputation that never heals. Having said this, for the Christian, the finality of death only brightens the reality of heaven and makes the “blessed hope” that much more wonderful.

MINISTRY OF COMFORT

Just as Jesus did more than send a message of comfort to Mary and Martha at the loss of their brother Lazarus, so Jesus traveled to Bethany and stood by the grave and wept. Today, just as then, the bereaved still need the ministry of comfort. The church family at the New Covenant Fellowship seeks to give the ministry of comfort to Marvin's family—to his wife, to his daughters, to his son, to many of his relatives, and to so many of his loved ones. We are to comfort one another. The words: “mourn with those who mourn” (**Romans 12:15**) is a vital ministry among God's people. These words of comfort have focused on the beauty of Marvin Wilson's life and how it had been exemplified in his life during his ministry as a disciple of Jesus. It is never wrong to weep when loved ones are taken from us. If Marvin Wilson could speak to us from the grave, he, no doubt, would encourage his brothers and sisters in Christ and all his family to put their trust in the One who gives eternal life.

CONCLUSION

As we conclude our remarks to the life and memory of Marvin Wilson, we are reminded that death teaches us of the reality of sin and the necessity of being born again. Our time upon earth is very short. Death is the great leveler—all equally turn to dust. The reality of death should remind each of us of the sovereignty of God. Moses writes: “You turn men back to dust, saying, “Return to dust, O sons of men” (**Psalms 90:3**). Death, again and again, should be a constant reminder of the frailties of humanity. Again, Moses captures man’s frailties:

For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night. ⁵ You sweep men away in the sleep of death; they are like the new grass of the morning— ⁶ though in the morning it springs up new, by evening it is dry and withered (**90:4-6**).

CLOSING PRAYER

Our Father, we need a source of strength and refuge. We need a resting place. We offer our thanks to you for being this kind of help in the time of trouble. Bless the memory of Marvin Wilson. We pray that Marvin’s death will not be in vain. Father help each of us to think upon the changes that occurred in his life because of his faith in Jesus as the savior of the world. We know that life is a mystery; we know that for now we all see through a glass darkly. Help us as we seek and search for answers to so many problems in life. Grant us the peace and comfort that comes from trusting in you. We pray this prayer in the name of Jesus our Lord. Amen!

THE FOLLOWING WAS READ AT MARVIN’S FUNERAL

Found in His Bible

The Bible contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you.

It is the traveler’s map, the pilgrim’s staff, the pilot’s compass, the soldier’s sword, and the Christian’s charter. Here Paradise is restored, Heaven opened, and the gates of hell disclosed. CHRIST is its grand subject, our good design for holy living, and the glory of God its end.

It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet. Read it slowly, frequently, and prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure. It is given to you in life, will be opened at the judgment, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labor, and will condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.

^[1]All Scripture citations are from the *New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996, c1984), unless stated otherwise.

fOr *his only begotten Son*